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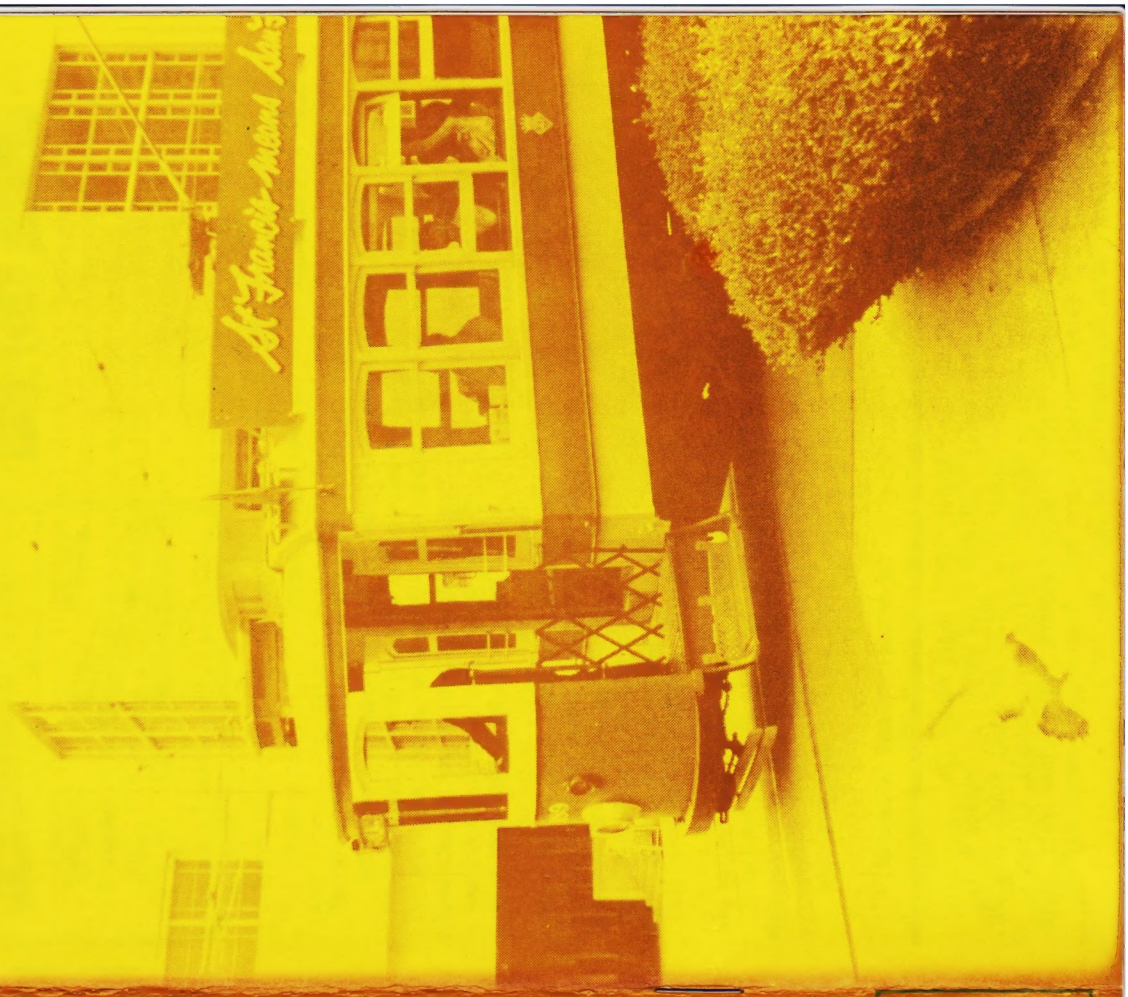
VOL. 13 NO. 16
AUGUST 1983
ISSUE NO. 274

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS



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LETTERS

This letter is in response to Amtrak's management decision to rely on travel agents to provide ticketing services to most of the rail traveling public by closing"insignificant stations." I believe this is going to be a disaster. In my several years as an Amtrak ticket clerk, I have seen enough travel agency-created foulups to believe that most travel agents who issue Amtrak tickets should not. With the exception of a few rail-oriented travel agents, most are not experienced enough about train travel to offer advice to the public and then sell the proper tickets.

Just about everything that can be done wrong to an Amtrak ticket I have seen done. Most mistakes concern overcharging--the bigger the price for the ticket, the more commission. I have seen tickets written for places that Amtrak does not even stop at--you have not lived until you've tried to explain that to a passenger. I have had passengers with sleeper space that somehow had not been protected in the computer by either the travel agent or Amtrak's reservation office. That can be exciting too.

One problem that the smaller stations are having is the Amtrak reservation offices will send a passenger to a travel agent instead of to Amtrak's own ticket office in that particular town. I have had passengers tell me that when they made their reservation they were told that they could not buy their ticket at the Amtrak station and would have to go to a travel agent and then were very surprised when told they made an extra trip for the tickets.

(continued on page 23)

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Published twice monthly by Message Media, P. O. Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Subscription $19.00 per year; single copy 80¢. Overseas and institutional rates on request. STAFF: James Russell, Editor. Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large. Regional Correspondents: Peter Putnam Bretz, Southern California; Jack Ferry, Illinois; Adron Hall, Mississippi; Kenneth Maylath, Maryland; Peter Roehm, Massachusetts; Ted Scull, New York.

ON THE COVER

An historic streetcar, one of two from Oporto, Portugal to run in the current Historic Trolley Festival in San Francisco, leaves the Transbay Terminal on Aug 22. For more on the Festival see Urban-Suburban Transit on page 7. RTN Photo.

Fateful METEOR Derails

The northbound SILVER METEOR, train 88, that left Florida on Aug 24, with engines 384 and 382 and 18 cars, was involved in three separate accidents on its way to New York. An Amtrak spokesman said that in the memory of everyone at Amtrak headquarters, there was "no precedent" for such bad luck to one train. And none of the accidents was the fault of either Amtrak or the railroad.

At Cook's Crossing GA, eight miles north of Savannah, the train fatally injured a trespasser, a woman fishing from a railroad bridge. Her three companions managed to scramble to safety. The train was delayed 1hr, 17mins.

Next, at Ridgeland NC, at milepost 459.3, the train struck a pickup truck, unoccupied, that was parked too close to--or perhaps on--the tracks. That accident delayed the train 25mins more.

At 1:35am on Aug 25, at Rowland NC the train derailed after hitting a stalled low-boy tractor-trailer that was carrying a grading machine. The train was traveling at 30mph, preparing to round a curve. The two engines and first two cars, both baggage cars, left the tracks. There were 413 passengers on board, and 21 were injured, with minor injuries expect for one elderly woman who was hospitalized. There were no injuries on the train in the first two accidents.

Passengers who were not taken to hospitals for treatment were bused on in ten chartered Weatherford buses to Washington DC. Passengers going north of Washington were transferred to train 82, the SILVER STAR, at Washington.

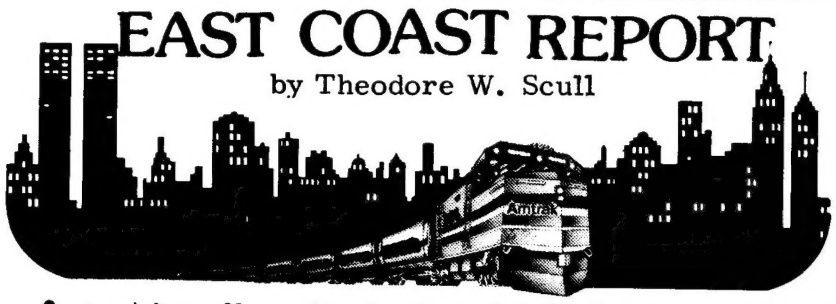
On Aug 26 the southbound METEOR struck an auto that had tried to beat the train to a crossing in Kenly NC. The 40-year old driver drove around the lowered arms of a crossing guard and was killed when the impact occurred. The crash occurred at 2:25am, and delayed the train 32 minutes. Engine 388 was on the point of that southbound train.

The New York Times referred to the train as the "Troubled train." Another newspaper, the Delaware County (PA) Sunday Times labelled it "Killer train." Reader R. W. Fredrick of Norwood PA told RTN that "The (Delaware County) Times is typical of the anti-railroad press in the Delaware Valley, but I found the appendage 'Killer Train' especially repugnant. It certainly wasn't the fault of Amtrak or the SCL Railroad that people trespassed on the tracks. Cannot something be done to counter this type of biased reporting? A condemnation of this by officials of Amtrak, the Association of American Railroads and perhaps NARP might serve notice to the news media that freedom of the press does not license libel. In this instance, I believe the Times owes Amtrak an apology."

RTN believes that the press frequently plays up train wrecks while ignoring the scores of automobile crashes that occur daily--crashes which are so frequent that they would probably become boring to readers if they were all written up in newspapers. When newspapers seem to imply that a train was at fault in an accident such as the above, they do a disservice to the nation's drivers, especially younger and more impressionable persons, for they unrealistically make it seem as if the train would bear responsibility for stopping if a car were at a crossing ahead of it. In so doing, they tend to undo the railroads' diligent work in educating young people about the dangers of venturing onto railroad tracks.

EAST COAST REPORT

by Theodore W. Scull



August is usually considered a slow month in New York when the heat and humidity slacken one's pace, and with so many residents on vacation, fewer than normal business and social interactions take place. However, news on the transit front has been anything but slow.

John D. Simpson, President of the New York City Transit Authority, resigned unexpectedly on Aug 16, citing several reasons for doing so that included the "intractable" problems in the system, "daily hammering" by critics, and the desire to spend more time with his family. Mr. Simpson's decision took effect on Aug 22 and while the Authority looks for a replacement, Daniel T. Scannell, first vice chairman of the MTA, will act as head, or as he put it, as a "utility infielder."

During his four years with the MTA, Mr. Simpson was considered by most people close to the issues to have been a generally good president. New York City Mayor Edward Koch said that it would be difficult to find "anyone who can do it better."

The head job commands an annual salary of $100,000 which is $10,000 less than the city's mayor gets, but $15,000 more than the state's governor received.

In a list of transit highlights since 1979, when Mr. Simpson arrived from Denver, where he headed the regional bus system, are one transit strike, two fare increases, withdrawal and return of 600 defective Grumman buses, the introduction of German attack dogs to protect the subway cars at night from vandals in the yards, a campaign to paint the subway cars white to discourage graffiti "artists" and a fierce token war with Connecticut over a 17½-cent coin that state had minted which happens to be the same size as New York's 75¢ subway token.

Most recently, some new problems have arisen that dramatically show major trends and imbalances in the subway's maintenance program. On the very day that Mr. Simpson announced his resignation, an IRT Local jumped the tracks at 238th Street, making the twelfth subway derailment in 1983 and equalling the total for all of 1982. Fortunately, no one was injured in the latest mishap. The major cause of the rash of derailments is poor track conditions.

The transit authority acknowledges that subway car maintenance has taken precedent over track replacement. As a result, more trains are in daily service rather than sitting idle awaiting repairs, more cars have doors that open and air conditioning that blows cool and fewer undercarriage motors have been dropping on the tracks and derailing trains.

The rash of accidents is attributed to a decline, by almost half in the last ten years, in rail and tie renewals. A track report by Harry M. Williamson, a $500-a-day special consultant, identified 500 trouble spots along the 723 miles of track. The transit authority immediately set 10mph speed limits at those sites, and some lines have suspended service at nights and on weekends for repair work. The greatest impact felt thus far by the 2.4 million daily riders has been longer journeys to and from work. The system's on-time performance dropped from over 90% in May to 53% in July.

Some of the exhilarating thrills experienced by this correspondent, clattering at high speed thru rough crossovers and being jolted around numerous S-curves on

sections of the Lexington Avenue line, are looked on in hindsight with somewhat less enthusiasm.

The subway's most recent notoriety prompted the New York Times to send out reporter David W. Dunlap to interview passengers and to present the latest picture from underground. The front-page story had one rider saying that her experience was likened unto a "walk through the valley of death," and another who was quoted as saying "I'm leaving for Kenya and a safari very soon, so I guess it's preparation for life in the jungle." ★ ★ ★

While some of the subway's problems can also be attributed to old age, the 8-year-old ceiling that collapsed at the Journal Square Transportation Center in Jersey City on Aug 9, killing two and injuring 50, came as something of a shock. Fifty tons of steel and concrete fell 25 feet onto the mezzanine of the facility that handles 60,000 daily bus and PATH train riders as a repairman in the ceiling's crawlspace was checking out a reported sag. He escaped serious injury by hanging onto a pipe after the 10,600-square-foot ceiling fell beneath him. More passengers might have been killed were it not for the fact that at 9:05am the bulk of the rush hour had passed.

The Journal Square Station was closed for over a week, and PATH riders who normally used the station were bused to nearby Grove Street Station, lengthening their journey by 10-15 minutes. PATH trains passed thru the closed station without stopping.

This correspondent en route to the NJ Transit headquarters in Newark changed trains at Journal Square in Aug 17, the day the station reopened. While the debris had been cleared up and removed, the platforms and main concourse above were a maze of reinforced steel supports and protective scaffolding. The repairs may take up to two months to complete, and in the meantime the station is deemed by the authorities to be safe for public use. The station was similarly given a "clean bill of health" after the ceiling's sag was first detected four months ago.

In the PATH train bound for Newark, Penn Station was posted a public notice that promised riders "New Platform Surfaces, New Wall Surfaces, New Ceilings, New Lighting, New Heated Waiting Areas, and More to Come!" Alongside was a list of five lucky station, none of which was Journal Square. The notice, put up before the ceiling collapse, was meant to inform PATH riders how their Aug 1 15¢ fare increase was to be spent. ★ ★ ★

In brief, another Metro-North strike was narrowly averted when the railroad and the machinists submitted their proposals on subcontracting to binding arbitration, with a decision due on or before Sep 1, and a gas main leak in Queens forced the Long Island Rail Road to shut its main line, delaying thousands of evening rush hour commuters. Electric switches near the rupture could have caused a fire. One commuter, James Feeney of East Northport, sensibly took the subway to the LIRR's Hunters Point Avenue Terminal in Queens and then twiddled his thumbs until the crowds gradually dissipated. ★ ★ ★

Of interest to the area's rail enthusiasts and ethnic food lovers are two approaching railroad-sited festivals. The partly restored Jersey Central Terminal (no longer serving trains) will host its second annual fair on Saturday and Sunday Sep 10 and 11. People using mass transit may reach the terminal by taking the PATH (50¢) to Journal Square, Jersey City, then a bus (60¢) marked Central Railroad Terminal along Central Avenue to the terminal.

Even more fun is Hoboken Terminal's Renaissance Festival III to be held on Saturday, Oct 1 at the NJ Transit facility in Hoboken NJ. Last year's festivities included displays of railroad equipment, free rides on the ancient Morristown electrics, an auction, and scores of tables featuring railroad memoribilia, and an abundance of exotic foods. The terminal is well served by trains and buses of NJ Transit and the PATH system, but alas no ferries, as they made their final runs in Nov 1967. This reporter will be shuffling thru the terminal between the tables belonging to Broadway Limited Antiques, Quadrant Press and the World Ship Society.

RAIL CANADA

CANADIAN TRANSPORT MINISTER Jean-Luc Pepin has been removed from office, as reported last issue--demoted to assistant to External Affairs Minister Allan MacEachen. Transport 2000 officers John Pearce and Harry Gow were told last year by Pepin's Atlantic Provinces assistant that "He (Pepin) carries the VIA Rail cuts around his neck like an albatross. They are a real political liability." Prime Minister Trudeau effected the move as part of a cabinet shakeup in mid-August to try to help his sagging political popularity. Lloyd Axworthy of Manitoba now has what Montreal Gazette commentator Don McGillivray called "the graveyard portfolio of Transport." He noted that Pepin was its "latest victim", but couldn't understand why: "It's hard to see why Pepin deserves such treatment."

QUEBEC TRANSPORT MINISTER Michel Clair will be transferred to the post of Minister of Social Affairs this fall, a promotion. Rail supporters speculate that this may mean that Prime Minister Levesque and cabinet approve of Clair's work, which as is well known, has proceeded somewhat in line with the philosophy of Transport 2000 Quebec. In fact, Transport 2000 Canada president and his predecessor have been able to work quite closely with Clair and his aides on a number of dossiers. Exceptions would be the Minister's over-investment in Quebecair and his reluctance to get involved in branch line programs ala New York, Vermont, Michigan, etc. Clair's predicted departure will be closely watched by those interested in Montreal's suburban trains and the VIA Rail court cases.

THE ATLANTIC LIMITED'S restoration would save VIA Rail $2 million in subsidies, calculates the Coalition for the Improvement of Passenger Services, of St-John, New Brunswick. A proposal to restore the train was presented to VIA Rail officials, and a VIA spokesperson, Mme Rejeanne Blais, said the proposal was "well thought out" and that one could not reject it, despite certain lacunae, according to a report in the Ottawa paper Le Droit. While the Halifax-Montreal ATLANTIC LIMITED was dropped in 1981, the OCEAN continues to operate via northern New Brunswick. Mme Blais said that VIA will give its official reaction to the proposal in three or four months.

CANADIAN PACIFIC DISCONTINUES its credit card as of Sep 30. Presumably the dropping of the credit card bureau is an economy move, such as some oil companies in the U.S. have made recently. Canadian Pacific Ltd of Montreal suffered a slump of nearly 45% in profits during the first half of 1983. CP Rail's profits increased, however, by $67.1 million, to a total of $106.3 million, but this was due mostly to the inclusion this year of interim grain payments, which covered the first 11 months of the crop year.

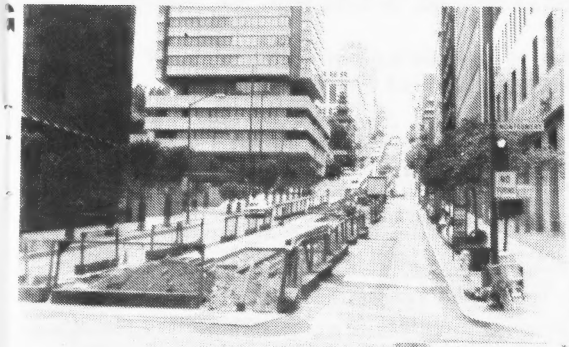
ALBERTA TRANSPORT MINISTER Marv Moore said, according to an Aug 11 newspaper report, that there are doubts about the building of a proposed Edmonton-Calgary high speed train. A number of cutbacks in airport and highway spending also were outlined by the Minister.

WALKING THE PLANK in Jasper: Canadian National parked a string of company cars carrying executives attending a Jasper convention Aug 3 and 4, in front of the station, blocking access for VIA passengers from the Prince Rupert-Edmonton trains. Newspaper reports told of senior citizens stumbling across rails and ballast at 6am while waiters could be seen preparing breakfast for the bigwigs in the private cars. CN had provided planks across the tracks for VIA customers, and a CN public affairs man retorted that if passengers "didn't choose to walk to the planks but took a short cut instead, that's their responsibility." VIA was demanding an explanation from CN.

CONRAIL IS PROPOSING to sell the Detroit Tunnel, the Canada Southern Railway and the Niagara Bridge to CN and CP on an equal partnership basis. This could lead to abandonment of the double-track Canada Southern.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

SAN FRANCISCO TROLLEY FESTIVAL RUNS AS CABLE CAR SYSTEM REBUILDING CONTINUES



San Francisco's Historic Trolley Festival continues thru Oct 3. The streetcars, running on the surface of Market Street, are primarily a tourist attraction to replace the cable cars during the rebuilding of the entire cable system.

The photo at left is of California Street taken on Aug 14, illustrating the current state of construction there. The entire cable car section of the street has been dug up and is fenced off to traffic.

Photo at right shows another cable car substitute for the benefit of tourism--the commercially-operated motorized cable car. Photos by RTN.

Besides the two Portuguese Brill-built trolleys, one of which is shown on our cover, the Festival includes an English "boat tram", a boat-shaped open car that also ran in Philadelphia during the Bicentenial celebration; a 1903 Brill car from Portland, Oregon; a 1928 car from Milwaukee; car 648, a 1930 car from Melbourne, Australia; and several older S.F. Muni cars.

Trolleys run at 15-min intervals between Transbay Terminal and 17th & Castro Sts daily except Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Weekend and holiday hours are 11am-7pm, and 9am-5pm other days. Trolleys are available for charter. The phone number is (415) 558-2451.

Melbourne is selling off its older trolleys, similar to the one in S.F. They are being replaced by new vehicles. The purchase price is $20,000 each, and the Muni has expressed some interest in buying some for a proposed permanent historic trolley line on the Embarcadero between Market Street and Fisherman's Wharf.

The San Francisco Chronicle reported that on Aug 8 cable workers uncovered at the corner of California and Kearny an "underground vault"containing the oldest cable machinery in existence, that was installed in 1877.

★ ★ ★

SAN DIEGO TROLLEY had a spectacular derailment Aug 22 at 5:34pm, and wirephoto picutures of it appeared in many newspapers. An empty Airport Transportation Service bus returning from a charter run, ran a red light and collided with the 3-car trolley, unit 1016 on the point, at 12th Avenue and G Street. There were 17 passengers aboard, according to a newspaper account, and the trolley derailed and ran about 6 or 8 feet into the front of an office building, the headquarters of Hang Ten International. There were 9 minor injuries. The bus overturned, but the trolley, "built like a tank," was almost unscathed.

THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC has been granted permission by the ICC to abandon its West Los Angeles track that planners are eyeing for use as a commuter line for the Olympic Games next year. This move could cause the price of the right of way to increase markedly. The County Board of Supervisors agreed to petition the ICC to delay its decision. Transportation planners are interested in the land for future commuter lines, in addition to the "Olympic Express."

THE TOKYO SUBWAY is covering 85% of its costs from the fare box, according to a recent newspaper report.

THE MIAMI METRORAIL plans to open the southern half of its route, about 10 miles, on Dec 18. That section runs between Dadeland and downtown Miami.

LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL opponent Bobbi Fiedler got into a sparring match with S. Calif. Rapid Transit District general manager John Dyer on Aug 24. Dyer walked into the debate against the advice of his advisers, and was stunned when Fiedler announced that the County Grand Jury will investigate the Metro Rail project. In actuality, the jury's action is merely a routine oversight move on local government.

LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD and New York's MTA came to an agreement at 6am Aug 26 after all-night negotiations, thus preventing a threatened strike.

BART AWARDED $19,000 in prize money in a contest in which architecture students were asked to design extensions to four existing BART stations which would allow commercial development of BART's property. Grand prize winner was Wanda Nazaretian of Portland OR for her model of development of the Fremont station.

BART WAS MEETING on Sep 1 to make a decision on future extensions of the system.

NEW YORK'S TRANSIT AUTHORITY got an interim chief on Aug 22 when 70-year old Dan Scannell took over from resigning John Simpson. That same day, the 13th subway derailment of the year occurred, on the IRT-No. 1 line. No one was hurt, but service was disrupted most of the day to upper Manhattan and The Bronx. The derailment occurred on the 225th Street Bridge in upper Manhattan. (The 12th derailment of the year happened on Aug 16, the day Simpson announced his resignation; the derailment was of a No. 1 line train on an elevated section near 238th St & Broadway.)

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY chairman Richard Ravitch announced on Aug 29 that he is resigning.

SAN FRANCISCO MUNI Railway has suffered a "rash of accidents" in the past six weeks, the latest happening on Aug 30 when a 78-year old woman whose coat caught in a bus door was dragged by the vehicle and had one leg mangled by it. The driver of the bus reportedly has had six "avoidable" accidents in the past five years. The bus drivers' union blamed poor training of drivers by Muni management.

TWO MBTA TRAINS, with no passengers aboard, collided in Medford MA the morning of Aug 29. One motorman was injured. Service was disrupted into mid-afternoon.

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT fares rise an average of 8% on Sep 1.

ELECTRIC TROLLEY COACHES have replaced diesel buses on San Francisco's 24-Divisadero line effective Aug 24. For the occasion, the S.F. Muni demonstrated a trolley coach retrofitted with a small gasoline engine and generator that allow it to run in a limited manner without the overhead power, to evade traffic jams, etc.

NEW YORK MAYOR Cuomo said on Aug 31 that in selecting a new chairman for the MTA, to replace the resigning Richard Ravitch, he will favor an "independent" person like Mr. Ravitch--this in spite of the fact that the Governor could use the office to further his own aims in the agency.

SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD has recommended that the West Los Angeles line, now in 80-lb rail, be changed to 133-lb continuously welded rail if it is to be used for an "Olympic Express." The Rapid Transit Committee, however, believes that 115-lb rail, at a lower cost, would be quite adequate.

Amtrak Station Closures

I must write this anonymously because of fear of possible retaliation by my employer, Amtrak. This is to add further to the ridiculous station-closing policy that will be shortly adopted by Amtrak and will wipe out millions of dollars in potential revenues.

As a note of irony in this situation, I learned from a reliable Chicago District source that the money normally used to operate these stations is being given to the On-Board Supervisor/Chief program instituted by Amtrak in July. Originally, the program was on a test basis and would probably terminate at the end of September. In mid-July it was decided by Amtrak President Claytor's office to find any means possible to save his "pet" project. That saving will kill most Midwest and Atlantic states region stations. The article in RTN 271 was outstanding in pointing out the asinine accounting methods used to determine whether a station remains open or not, and I won't attempt to repeat them here.

I want to let all readers and supporters of Amtrak know the sham that is being pulled on the rail-traveling public, and to urge them to write and protest to Amtrak, city and state officials. If enough support is given on this problem, we can stem what will eventually be the closing of vital stations. Once they are gone, the buildings can be closed, rented out or torn down, never again to serve the function they were built for.

Ironically, three of the stations on the hit-list happen to be almost brand new and do a heavy, steady business, but they do not have Amtrak ticket printers. The three are Niagara Falls NY, Canton OH and Elyria OH. Another, Temple Tx, recently (1979) had major rehabilitation, costing in excess of $300,000. Again, the stations are being eliminated because they use book tickets, which account for low issuances, making it appear (to Amtrak only) that they do not do much business. Shown below is a tabulation I ran on daily boardings for Canton OH and Erie PA for a 9-day period just to show what kind of ridership they have. The tabulation gives dates from Aug 4 thru Aug 12; each date gives both ON and OFF counts as a total.

CANTON OH:	Aug 4 - 37	Aug 7 - 50	Aug 10 - 47	
	5 - 36	8 - 37	11 - 43	
	6 - 31	9 - 40	12 - 35	TOTAL: 356
ERIE PA:	Aug 4 - 37	Aug 7 - 62	Aug 10 - 43	
	5 - 56	8 - 37	11 - 38	
	6 - 58	9 - 35	12 - 51	TOTAL: 417

Many of my immediate superiors are opposed to the On-Board Supervisor/ Chief program because it is a massive drain on Amtrak finances. Each chief alone (there are over 150 of them) is paid a staggering yearly salary of $30,000. To date on my station's line they have caused more aggravation than we care to remember. It is supposed to be their job to ensure that all food service, cars and equipment are in top condition before departure. So far, every train leaving Chicago, Philadelphia, New York and Washington has without some of the following: ice, sodas, breakfast foods and general snack items. The chiefs have demanded that ticket personnel (the very same whose jobs are on the line) go to markets to buy food items, which at times is impossible, especially where there is only one person working. Also, many trains are departing with sleepers and diners hot.

For all the money Amtrak is wasting on these people it could have completely restored the diners to their pre-Reagan state and even opened stations in new locations. Please don't let Amtrak wipe out vital service because it all eventually will spread and affect other areas just at Amtrak's discretion. It is time to put an end to Mr. Claytor's whims and ill-studied projects such as this.

(continued on page 21)

Contemplating A New FLORIDIAN

by Robert J. Swan

I've been finally clearing the decks of my 1975-77 RTNs. I've read them before, but now I am indexing them. So I am reviewing much good stuff, including some gems I will mention here, items that sort of slipped by the first time around:

W. Graham Claytor, Jr. is appointed Secretary of the Navy by Jimmy Carter in the First February '77 RTN. Implication: our friend and leader will be having other things on his mind.

In that same issue, the colorful rail leader and Clearance Card Amtrak chronicler Dr. Dan Monaghan gives the all-time understandable and reference explanation on the profitability of long-haul versus short-haul trains. He is explaining a financial table which is printed without elaboration in the First December '76 issue. If anyone ever tells you that to save money Amtrak should axe some long-distance trains and concentrate on the profitable NEC trains, quietly excuse yourself, break out these two references, and you'll have all the ammunition (facts) needed to disabuse the nonsense.

I won't try to give a full run-down here. Leader Claytor has heard the bookkeeping arguments ad nauseum; I think even he would get a refreshing deeper understanding by checking out these references. "Direct costs" are the key. There are hardly any "direct costs" to operating long-distance trains other than wages, and the passengers ride comparatively long distances. It's when all the other expenses not directly the result of one particular train running--when these are allocated--and on the basis of a train's mileage yet--that make the long-distance trains often look like losers. So, what you really need to look at is "direct costs" before they are distorted by mileage.

Reader John R. Pawson, in Second February '77 comments that "the question of Amtrak's route structure should be one of need, not profitability." I hear that. Then he stumbles into the misapprehension that long-haul partisans insist there is a lot of riding between end points. Actually, only a small fraction of the business is there; mostly it's the on-and-off trade at stations along the line.

It's FLORIDIAN history I want to bring up also. Who's got the whole story, the whole picture? It sort of sneaked up on us. I have a whole volume on it, but from mostly a later date. Paul Reistrup was our leader then, and he and almost everybody except me goofed on this train. He went along with staff findings by Harold Graham. The error started early on, and the happening is described in Second June '77 RTN. Amtrak's appropriation was being cut--and additional tasks were being required of Amtrak within these funds--and Amtrak decided it was better for one train to go, rather than reduce the quality of services on all the others, and FLORIDIAN was chosen because of its statistics. Many asserted that the statistics would be improved with an Atlanta routing; this routing always included Chattanooga, a tough one for the railroads thru a difficult freight-heavy gateway. The RTN story has Amtrak saying an Atlanta re-routing would cost $20-25 million in capital expenditures.

The Peroration to my 1979 Updated Amtrak Law edition* describes how Congressman Albert Gore, Jr. of Kentucky secured funds and saved the FLORIDIAN then, and those funds included the understanding of an Atlanta re-routing, even a Chattanooga re-routing which he had been pushing for. But that routing was costly, and Amtrak would later be saying that it also required upgrading of trackage to route thru Indianapolis. At some point I volunteered to Amtrak a solution, which was to re-route via both Birmingham and Atlanta. One person made that point at a hearing. And it is well-stated in a letter in the First March '78 RTN by James Hal Selzer, Jr.: "A Nashville-Birmingham-Atlanta routing serves a larger population--2.2 times as many potential riders as would a Chattanooga route. Economically, a routing of

(continued on page 15)

The View from Wyoming

by Charles S. Tubman

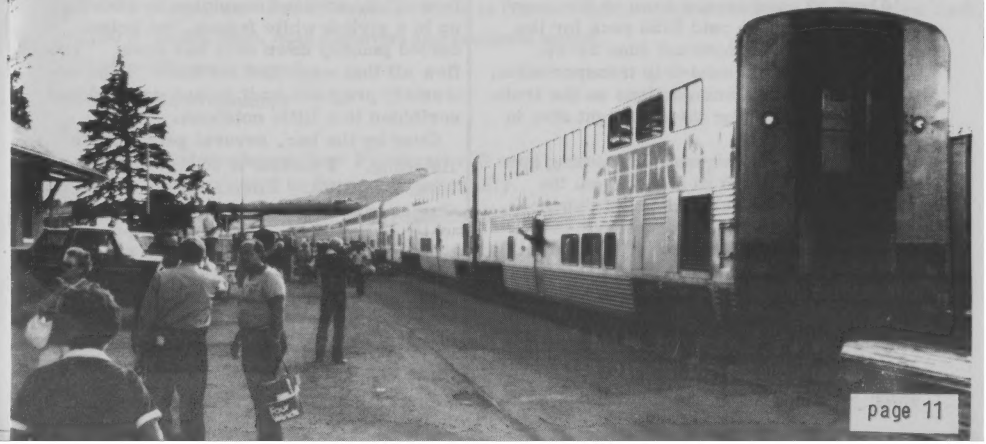
(Above:) Last (westbound) ZEPHYR into Rawlins WY on Jul 15. (Below:) The same train leaves Rock Springs. Photos by the author.

A crowd of several hundred people were on hand to say goodbye to what was supposed to be the last Amtrak train out of Rawlins, Wyoming on Friday, July 15. (Actually, the last train was the 9-hour late eastbound ZEPHYR which went thru later that night around 9pm.) The crowd included a group of "cowboys," "cavalry," and "convicts" (to promote tours of the old State Prison there) as well as the local high school band. A list of speakers included members of the Chamber of Commerce, railroaders, and an official from the Intermountain Association of RR Passengers.

The only discordant note was sounded when one of the cowboys hopped on board the train and picked up a female sleeping car passenger who was cut on the head when her "captor" fell on the platform. The conductor was "arrested" for "train robbery," and a coffin marked "Amtrak" was on prominent display on the platform.

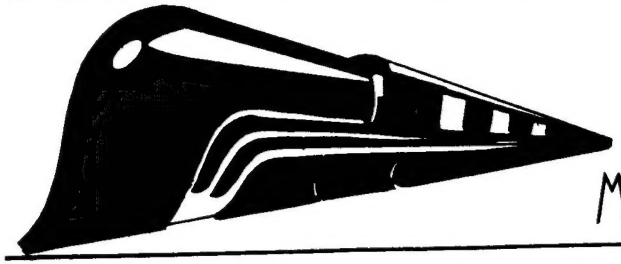
It was a festive but sad ending to 115 years of service thru Rawlins.

(continued on page 14)



On Board the Mystery Express

by Luther Young



The gunshot sounded at 2:30am as the train hurtled north from the Big Apple with a full moon above and a New England dawn waiting somewhere up the track.

A scream split the night: "Oh, James! James, it was a shot!"

The woman ran shrieking thru the sleeping-car corridor and slammed the door to her compartment. Other doors opened. Passengers with hopeful smiles peeked out, nodding at each other and whispering, "This must be it."

A puzzled man in his underwear appeared in the midst of the chaos, fumbled with his glasses and loudly demanded to know what was going on. "It's O.K., sir," one of the smiling passengers said. "There's a murder on this train every month."

The Mystery Express, it's called--a theater on wheels, with shades of Agatha Christie and Alfred Hitchcock along for the ride. Once a month, on the weekend of the full moon, it is hooked up to Amtrak's regular passenger run to Montreal and pulled "From New York to MURDER!", as the blood-red tickets promise.

It's a train trip the mystery buffs and amateur sleuths will never forget.

Described as a "passenger participation play" by its author, David Landau, the Mystery Express features actors posing as passengers or crew, mingling with the real passengers.

In a series of carefully plotted and timed scenes during the 12-hour ride thru the Connecticut River Valley and Vermont to Montreal, they weave an elaborate web of clues--and red herrings--that must be unraveled to guess who committed a murder in the early hours of Saturday.

About 35 adventurers from as far away as Vail, Colorado paid $350 each for the inaugural trip to Montreal June 24-26. The fee included round-trip transportation, all meals and accommodations on the train and a hotel room for the overnight stay in Canada.

It included the rare and disquieting opportunity to sit next to someone on the train, sipping Scotch and complaining about Amtrak food, and to realize suddenly: This person might commit a murder. He's talking about microwaved quiche, but there's bashing on his mind.

"You can't trust anyone," said Landau, a 26-year-old writer and motion picture electrician whose New York firm, Murder To Go, produces the trips with Tucker Lamkin of Railplex Corp.

"It's as if you were on board and a real murder actually happened. No one person sees all the action or all the clues, and that's just how it would be in real life."

Who fired the gun? Who screamed? Who was the man in his underwear, and why was he misassigned a berth on a murder train? Who told a reporter it would be easy, when it turned out he became a suspect himself and half the people he interviewed were New York actors pretending to be just folks from New Rochelle?

Landau smiled, "Just keep your eyes open. The clues started as soon as you got on the train." Oh?

"Hello, I'm doing a newspaper story on the Mystery Express."

"Sure, and I'm Agatha Christie. You got a press card?" Andi Hankey wasn't going to be fooled this soon.

She and husband, Bob, from Medford Lakes NJ were in the midst of a game of Clue with their friends Jim Winner and Donna Karey. All four mystery freaks were wearing deerstalker hats and carrying magnifying glasses.

It was late Friday night, soon after the train had pulled out of Penn Station and headed north to murder.

In the restored lounge car called the "Palm Beach," where much of the play unfolded, the Mystery Express adventurers were hitting the cocktails, getting acquainted and making mental notes of such things as whether people's handshakes were left or right.

Susan Kwapil, a 37-year-old travel agent from Vail, aroused suspicion by showing up in a stylish white fedora, the brim curled jauntily down over her eyes. "You flew all that way, just for this?" The extremely pregnant Andi looked doubtful and scribbled in a little notebook.

Over by the bar, several people were listening. "I wonder if she's really pregnant," said Mary Ellen Slate, a writer for Games magazine who was trying to decide whether this bizarre trip was worth space in the publication. "Has anyone touched her stomach?"

Strange, strange group. Could any of these folks be trusted?

At a nearby table, Jerome Brookmin, a 72-year-old publisher of business journals in New York, talked about the mysteries he wrote for WEVD radio in the 1940s.

One plot involved a victim with an allergy. "I killed him with onion soup."

Midnight passed. Waiting for murder is sleepy business. Many of the passengers headed off to their compartments, convinced that nothing had been revealed.

Andi and company were still up. "Whenever we hear a scream, we'll take a picture," she said, and added: "The lights always go out... That's when it'll happen. You'll be sorry if you go to bed."

★ ★ ★

The gunshot sounded at 2:30, as the moon hung over some sleeping little town with no sign to identify it. There was no more sleep. In the cramped cabin, a coat hanger swung crazily from an overhead pipe as the train did some more hurtling. Was it a clue?

Dawn was waiting in Springfield MA, but the majority of passengers didn't rise and make it back to the "Palm Beach" until 8:30 or 9am, as the Mystery Express neared customs at the Canadian border.

While they ate breakfast, they examined a number of labeled "exhibits"--a blood stain in the kitchen, a torn airline ticket and matchbook at a table, a piece of cloth ripped from a sport coat and caught on the trim around a window between the lounge car and a sleeper.

Norman and June Cohen of Vineland NJ --by now convinced that their children meant no harm by giving them the trip as a 35th anniversary present--were sorting out the clues. "I think most of what happened in here last night was a red herring," Cohen said. "The question is, who's missing?"

That wasn't settled until detective Peter Lyric strode in. This had to be an actor, everyone decided, and so he was.

One by one, all the passengers had been accounted for, sometimes dashing murder theories by their very presence: "She's still alive!"

All the passengers appeared, except one. "It seems a body was found on the tracks this morning, rather mangled by the train," the detective began. "From identification on the body, we have discerned the victim to be..." --and he named the victim.

"Ha," someone sniffed, remembering the deceased's scandalous behavior. "They deserved what they got."

FRIDAY MYSTERY EXPRESS (NYP-MTL)

7:00 p Group meets at information kiosk in front of ticket windows in Penn Station, New York.
7:30 p Board train, hors d'oeuvres and cocktails served.
9:15 p Dinner is served.
10:30 p Entertainment.

SATURDAY

7:15 a Customs inspection. Passengers will need passport, voter registration card, or Social Security card to document nationality.
8:00 a Breakfast is served. Interrogation of witnesses.
10:05 a Arrival in Montreal. No one is permitted to leave the train until the culprit has been discovered.

SUNDAY

***8:45 a** Assemble in hotel lobby for transport to Windsor Station.
10:00 a Board the "Adirondack" for a scenic trip back to New York.
6:57 p Arrival at Grand Central Terminal and the end of the tour.

MYSTERY EXPRESS

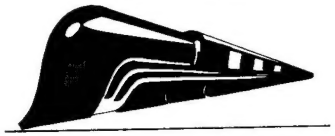
An interrogator, dressed in Sam Spade style, questioned the passengers and the principal characters who had been in the lounge-car drama the night before, bringing out new clues. Then he left the sleuths to ponder the mystery a little longer and visit the victim's room to discover the evidence planted there.

But soon time was up. The detective returned and embarked on a monologue of crafty deduction that was so full of cliches passengers began cheering after each one.

Finally, turning to the glowering culprit, he leveled both barrels. "Your mistake," he shouted, "was trying to implicate too many people. You'll have some new scenery now, (murderer). You're under arrest!"

"I'd do it again!" the murderer screamed.

Whew. The actors were introduced. The victim appeared from exile in a sleeping car. The winners were announced. Andi and seven others got it right.



For reservations and additional information, contact Madison Travel Bureau at 212-690-0955 201-377-2462, or write The Mystery Express, 28 Waverly Place, Madison, New Jersey 07940.

(Reprinted with permission of the Baltimore Sun.)

THE VIEW FROM WYOMING (continued from page 11)

Amtrak is reportedly looking at moving into the former D&RGW station in Salt Lake City, since they have been losing 20 minutes per day wying the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR on and off the D&RGW. The station is owned by the Utah Historical Society with the D&RGW being based out of the south wing of the building.

★ ★ ★

Amtrak officials were in Wyoming on Aug 16 to present their plan for a 403-b train. Reportedly they were concerned about the amount of long-haul connecting business that the company has lost out of Wyoming. Costs obtained by NARP show that Wyoming's share of a tri-weekly service would be $900,000 for the first year ($1.1 million for manned stations). At this point there is no support for 403-b service, in part because of a state funding problem, but primarily because of the attitude (as expressed to me by a state legislator) "why should Wyoming have to pay for what everyone else gets free?"--i.e., a minimal single route thru the state.

★ ★ ★

Because of continued flooding problems on the SP, there is some talk about Amtrak's moving onto the WP between Salt Lake City and Elko this fall. This would leave the PIONEER as the only train serving Ogden, Utah.

★ ★ ★

It has become apparent that any first-year "profits" to be made by re-routing the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR over the Rio Grande have been eaten up by:

(1) Late running caused by a combination of flooding, heat-related track problems on the BN, and the fact that a fully-loaded CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR cannot cross the D&RGW as quickly behind two locomotives as the nearly empty "test train" did last February. If Amtrak continues to accede to Rio Grande's demand of $3000 per train for a third locomotive--a service that the UP used to provide free--, it will cost them annually $2,190,000. The padding that was built into the former UP schedule allowed Amtrak to be at least in the ballpark during the flood problems with the BN the last two summers.

(2) Costly hotel and meal bills for passengers who have missed connections in Chicago, not to mention inconvenience for passengers on trains that are held for the late CALIFORNIA ZEPHYRS.

(3) Overtime pay for station personnel all up and down the line.

(4) Loss of long-haul revenue due to the beginning of short-blocking of seats between Denver and Glenwood Springs (tho it's questionable how long it will be before Denver-area travel agencies begin dropping the train like a hot potato since it takes only about three hours to drive between the two points). Supposedly Amtrak's Chicago reservation bureau has been told to begin putting West Coast passengers on the SOUTHWEST LIMITED and the EMPIRE BUILDER when possible. Amtrak's L.A.-Las Vegas and Oakland-Reno business will also begin to feel the pinch soon.

It will be interesting to see if the executive-level drew at 400 North Capitol will be willing to admit that perhaps they rushed onto the D&RGW a bit too hastily.

★ ★ ★

Since the last westbound train on the Wyoming route carried 515 passengers west of Rawlins, almost none of whom were making the "last ride", and RTN reported 700 out of Denver on the first trip, I'd be very curious to know how "twice as many people were using the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR already"? (see RTN 271, page 15).

FLORIDIAN (continued from page 10)

the train via Chattanooga will do in the Southwest what the routing of it away from Indianapolis has accomplished in the Midwest."

POINTS: Tying an Indianapolis re-routing rehabilitation expense to FLORIDIAN by Amtrak planners was wrong. Not keeping their promise to route via Atlanta was wrong. Congressman Gore's fixation with the costly and difficult Chattanooga routing was wrong. My Peroration had some other fine points in the new Law, too. In short, the demise of FLORIDIAN was wrong.

Why bring this up now? Partially, I suppose, to give our new leader an historical perspective on that train, when he had his hands full as Secretary of the Navy. And we all, including myself, forget items. But partially, also, in connection with contemplation of a new FLORIDIAN, offshooting from the CITY OF NEW ORLEANS at Memphis, thence Birmingham, Macon, Savannah, Jacksonville, carrying a GULF WIND (Second January '77 RTN) sleeper and coach to/from south Florida and next year's New Orleans World's Fair. Note the minimum of capital expense on this routing, using mostly existing Amtrak stations. Perhaps this is the time for mobilization to close these two Amtrak missing links.

I've also asked for consideration of re-routing CRESCENT Atlanta-Birmingham-Montgomery-Mobile where it could combine for a ways with FLORIDIAN and GULF WIND. An ideal rescheduling--or finding that it's not 100% possible--can drive good rails batty. If a second train on a route is needed, that's not all bad either--see Reistrup's speech in Second October '76 RTN.

Here's a proposal that should drive everybody crazy! And if you like it that much, maybe you'll all persuade all the cities and states and railroads involved to pitch in appropriately, with 403(b) funds, raised speed limits, better crossing protection, sharing of stations, and publicity.

FLORIDIAN offshoot at Memphis from CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, for Birmingham, Atlanta, Macon, Savannah, Jacksonville, S. Florida.

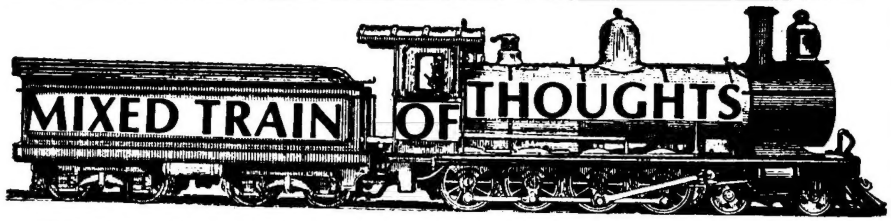
CRESCENT from New York City to Atlanta, Birmingham, Montgomery, Flomaton, Mobile, Biloxi-Gulfport, New Orleans.

GULF WIND from New Orleans to Biloxi-Gulfport, Mobile, Flomaton, Tallahassee, Jacksonville, S. Florida.

It'll drive you crazy trying to combine CRESCENT and GULF WIND New Orleans-Flomaton; GULF WIND and FLORIDIAN Jacksonville-S. Florida; FLORIDIAN and CRESCENT Birmingham-Atlanta. Enjoy it. And if it doesn't work, remember Reistrup told us that we don't have efficiency and we don't serve until we have at least two trains

on every route.

*Robert J. Swan's Updated Amtrak Law publication is available for $25 from the author at PO Box 1866, Long Beach CA 90801.



THE SAN JOAQUINS are the next trains on California Governor Deukmejian's hit list, according to reliable sources. Concerned about them, NARP's Leif Lange wrote the following memo: "Amtrak's Sacramento-Stockton connecting bus service for the SAN JOAQUIN trains made a profit of $1500 in June 1983, the second consecutive month the service has operated at a profit. This dedicated service carries an average of 15 connecting passengers per bus, and ridership has grown steadily since the connection was implemented in Sep 1980.

"Until recently, Caltrans had paid for the entire cost of operating the bus service, while all revenues were collected by Amtrak and credited to the SAN JOAQUIN train account. Under the new billing system, the bus service receives a direct revenue credit per passenger carried.

"The Bakersfield-L.A. dedicated bus service began operating under the revenue credit system on Jul 1, 1983. It is expected that this service will also operate above break-even levels.

"Both services are considered Amtrak bus services, with only passengers carried who are transferring to a train. Thru fares are established together with train fares. Amtrak was very reluctant to become involved in running buses, and private carriers were unwilling to match their existing schedules to train schedules. Because bus connections were unreliable and inconvenient, Caltrans decided to fully fund the dedicated buses. Certainly there are opportunities elsewhere in the country where potentially profitable routes exist where buses could be operated as feeders. Yet, Graham Claytor insists that 'we're not in the bus business.' This should be a lesson to the private carriers who refuse to cooperate with Amtrak. If Greyhound ran an extra section as a semi-dedicated feeder to the SAN JOAQUINS, it could carry all the current train riders plus local bus passengers as well--at even a greater profit. Under the existing situation, the profit will stay with the trains".....

★ ★ ★

WHEN PRESIDENT REAGAN signed the FY 1984 transportation appropriations bill in mid-August, he did so at his ranch near Santa Barbara. The bill gives Amtrak $716.4 million--more than the $662 million the White House wanted for Amtrak, and greater than the $700 million of the previous fiscal year. Northeast Corridor improvements are also funded in the bill, to the amount of $100 million. The total of the transportation bill was $10.9 billion, $18.7 million more than the White House had requested.....

THE FLORIDA DOT announced recently that the SILVER PALM "has been setting records since it started operating last fall." May was the fourth consecutive month that ridership hit new highs. The state also bragged that the train had a 96.7% on-time record in May. Florida DOT Secretary Paul N. Pappas said he was "impressed with the popularity of the SILVER PALM." In May, 5602 passengers were carried on the Miami-Tampa 403(b) train.....

NEW YORK READER tells us of an incident of "rude and abusive treatment" on the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, train 6, on May 21. Our reader and his companion boarded in Denver on May 20, heading for Chicago and occupying deluxe bedroom A in car 3630. At 8:00 the next morning the porter knocked on their door and accused them of smoking marijuana in their room. He told them that other passengers had complained of marijuana smoke drifting into their bedrooms. He said, and the conductor later repeated, that they must have been smoking because they (being in their twenties) were the only young passengers in the car. The irony of this accusation was that they travel first class to escape smokers who occupy the rear seats of coaches, and they stuff cloth under their bedroom door to keep smoke out. Both of them are sensitive to smoke and are non-smokers themselves. The porter told them that police would board at the next stop to search their belongings, but the police never appeared. However, the couple felt themselves to be "prisoners" in their room, and they were given no chance to clear the accusations made against them. They later wrote Amtrak, requesting a refund of their Denver-Chicago fare. We hope they'll inform us of Amtrak's response.....

A PROPOSED AMENDMENT to the Amtrak Act, sponsored by Rep. James Florio of New Jersey, would give Amtrak the power to veto any rail passenger service proposed by a private company in the U.S. Colorado Midland Railway spokesmen immediately announced their opposition to this bill, which is to be presented to Congress after the summer recess. The Wyoming delegation is expected to oppose it. Among others speaking out against it was Andrew Selden, a member of the Minnesota ARP. Meanwhile, leaders of the revived Colorado Midland are stil fighting to establish service across Wyoming. They want to run Salt Lake City-Denver overnight trains on the UP. The railroad is reportedly skeptical of their success. The Colorado Midland is talking of first-class Pullman trains with linen and china as in the old days. They are aiming for a fall startup.....

★ ★ ★

WEST SIDE CONNECTION, which will connect the Empire Service line with Penn Station in New York, could be in operation by 1985. The following summary of the planned work comes from the NY DOT via Kevin Gregoire and Walter Gehring: Amtrak proposes that all short distance trains be operated by Turbos and long distance ones use Amfleet equipment with a locomotive change at 40th St in Manhattan. They will need a 6-min engine change to allow for electric operation into Penn Station. But the NY DOT believes Amtrak should develop a permanent solution which eliminates any engine change in New York. Ventilating the new tunnel and appropriate areas of Penn Station would allow turbine and diesel locomotives to enter. NY DOT believes this plan should be pursued, but Amtrak thinks clearances would not be sufficient. At ground level at the area of the 30th St. Yard, a new rail car storage yard is being constructed by the MTA for used by the Long Island Rail Road. A short tunnel under 10th Avenue will connect this yard with the existing Yard B just west of Penn Station. The proposed West Side Connector will have to pass under this new yard, and over the Penn Tubes, which carry mainline tracks under the Hudson River. Altho the number of trains now using Penn Station strains the capacity of the terminal at peak hours, the West Side Storage Yard will effectively increase the number of trains that can be handled, and with Amtrak control, additional train frequencies and other schedule adjustments can be accommodated. Train movements on the West Side Connection will be under control of Amtrak dispatchers located at Penn Station, insuring better coordination and less cost. The connection will be built for 60mph maximum speed, with lower speeds over the drawbridge and interlocking at Spuyten Duyvil (30mph) and at a sharp reverse curve near 60th St (20mph). The tunnel between 34th St & Penn Station will be limited to 25mph. The complete tunnel will actually extend from 38th St thru the yard, under 10th Ave and into Penn Station, reaching grade with existing Penn Station tracks east of 10th Avenue. The present phase includes only "digging the ditch" and encasing it in concrete, with

provisions for future installation of tracks, utilities, ventilation, etc. The tunnel costs $6 million of the total storage yard project cost of $138 million. The costs would be prohibitive if the two projects were not done together.....

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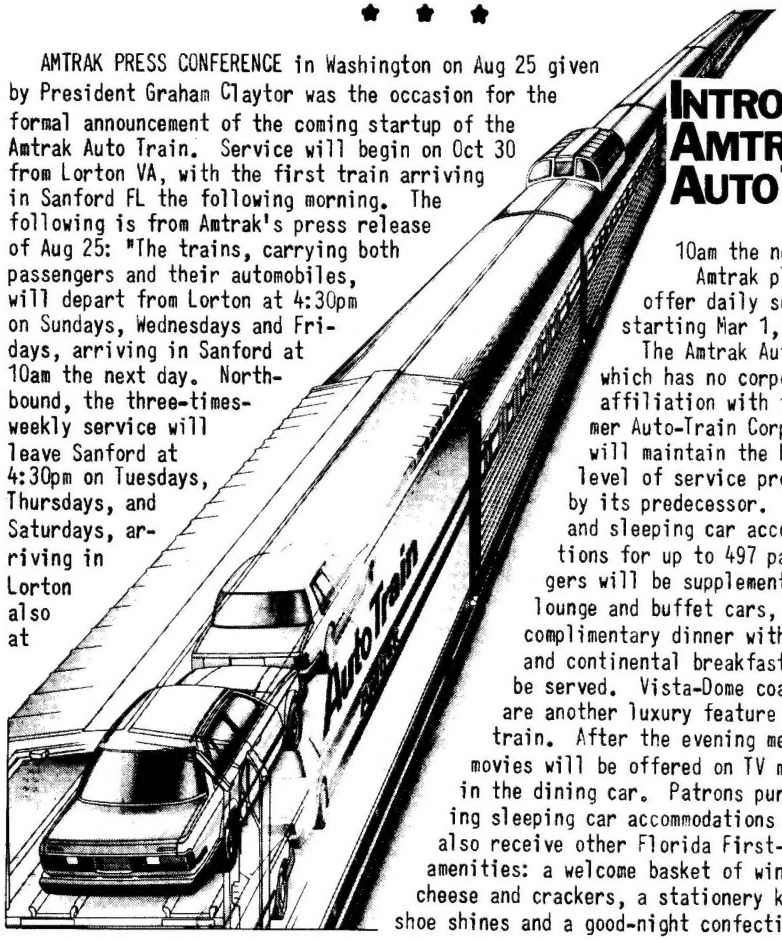


AMTRAK PRESS CONFERENCE in Washington on Aug 25 given by President Graham Claytor was the occasion for the formal announcement of the coming startup of the Amtrak Auto Train. Service will begin on Oct 30 from Lorton VA, with the first train arriving in Sanford FL the following morning. The following is from Amtrak's press release of Aug 25: "The trains, carrying both passengers and their automobiles, will depart from Lorton at 4:30pm on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays, arriving in Sanford at 10am the next day. Northbound, the three-times-weekly service will leave Sanford at 4:30pm on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, arriving in Lorton also at 10am the next day.

Amtrak plans to offer daily service starting Mar 1, 1984.

The Amtrak Auto Train, which has no corporate affiliation with the former Auto-Train Corporation, will maintain the high level of service provided by its predecessor. Coach and sleeping car accommodations for up to 497 passengers will be supplemented by lounge and buffet cars, where complimentary dinner with wine and continental breakfast will be served. Vista-Dome coaches are another luxury feature of the train. After the evening meal, movies will be offered on TV monitors in the dining car. Patrons purchasing sleeping car accommodations will also receive other Florida First-class amenities: a welcome basket of wine, cheese and crackers, a stationery kit, shoe shines and a good-night confection.

Attached to the rear of the train will be automobile carrier cars with a capacity of 264 autos. All told, the Amtrak Auto Train will be approximately 40-45 rail cars in length, and will be powered by two Amtrak diesel locomotives.

Reservations can be made, as with any other all-reserved Amtrak train, by calling the Amtrak toll-free reservations number listed in local telephone books or thru an Amtrak accredited travel agent.

Charges for the one-way trip will be $200 for the auto, $130 for adults, and $98 for children 2-11. No discounts will be allowed. The fare includes reclining leg-rest coach seats and complimentary tea or coffee and snacks available thruout the trip, in addition to the complimentary meals en route.

A bedroom, with private washroom and toilet, sleeping two, will cost an additional $225; a roomette, sleeping one, $100.

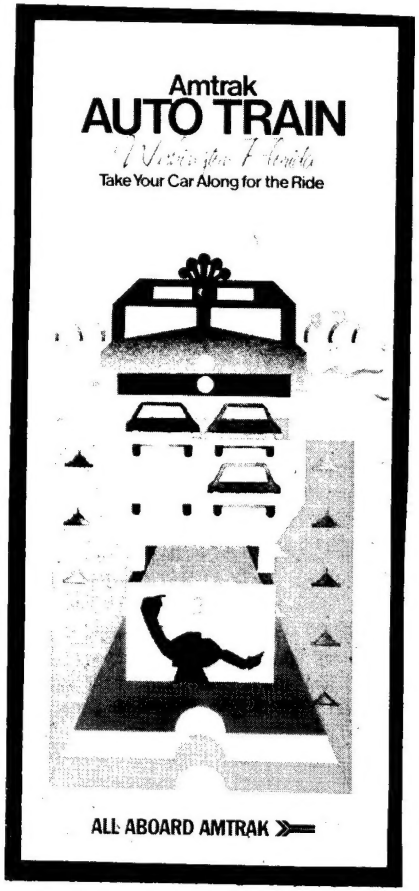
Brochures and maps with directions to train terminals are available by writing: Amtrak Distribution Center, PO Box 7717, Itasca IL 60143."

The drawing above is from a newspaper ad now running in Florida. On page 19 is shown Amtrak's Auto Train color brochure.....

AMTRAK'S AUTO TRAIN, during tri-weekly operation, will have the following consist: 2 P30 engines, sleeper crew car, 10/6 sleeper, 11-bedroom sleeper, 3 10/6 sleepers, Amfleet II coach, dome coach, Heritage lounge, buffet car, table car (where movies are shown), buffet car, coach, dome coach, 3 coaches, 20 tri-level auto carriers, 3 bi-level auto carriers. When daily operation begins next March, the consist will be the same except that a dome lounge will replace the Heritage lounge, and the auto carriers will number 10 tri-level and 18 bi-level. The train will be numbered 52 northbound and 53 southbound.

Amtrak has a detailed list of restrictions on the types of autos permitted on the Auto Train. Generally, Jeeps, vans and pickups are not allowed. Passengers must bring their auto to the station at least one hour before departure. Cars are loaded onto the train by size. Passengers may board up to 2 hours ahead of departure. Tickets will be lifted at a booth, and food and drink will be available on the train at that time. The evening meal will feature a choice of one of three entrees: beef, fish or poultry. Salad, vegetable and dessert will round out the supper.

PRESIDENT GRAHAM CLAYTOR has stated that the train will turn a profit, and a look at the steep prices for the service convinces people that the train will never suffer a loss due to underpricing. A roundtrip for a family of four will cost from $1312 to $2212, a newsman calculated. Nevertheless, Amtrak said that as of Aug 25 there were 2500 names on its waiting list. These people were getting first crack at tickets before they went on sale to the general public. As of Aug 26, reservations could be made thru Amtrak's computer. The first run was essentially sold out, Amtrak said. In order to secure a bedroom, a minimum of 1 3/4 tickets are needed, Amtrak said; a child's ticket is equivalent to 3/4.



Amtrak has indicated that it expects as many as 140,000 passengers per year to use the new service. At the Aug 25 press conference, Amtrak President Claytor said that operation of the new train is "consistent with our goal of improving service while reducing our dependence on Federal appropriations."

IN SANFORD, FLORIDA, city officials see the Auto Train service as a means of helping the local economy (Amtrak is using the old Auto-Train facility at Sanford, as it is at Lorton). When Auto-Train Corporation went bankrupt, 400 jobs were lost in Sanford. "We're delighted Amtrak is here, and we're going to do everything within our power to help them make (the Auto Train) successful", said Chamber of Commerce President Jack Horner. "We've always considered Amtrak to be an asset to the city, and now that will be truer than ever," said City Manager Peter Knowles.....

★ ★ ★

WORLD'S FAIR TRAIN for the Mississippi Gulf Coast will become a reality, its backers are convinced, despite Amtrak's unenthusiastic response to the proposal. They seem to be buoyed most by a Congressional subcommittee's

urging of Amtrak to go ahead with the service. As of late August, a number of projects in the affected states are going ahead, including station construction and some track improvements. Officials say that the infrastructure must be ready by next May 1 in order for the train to begin on schedule.....

AMTRAK'S GRAHAM CLAYTOR is interviewed by Passenger Train Journal in its current (Jul-Aug) 15th Anniversary issue. On the subject of dome cars, Claytor verified that Amtrak, in a year or two, might make one of the Western trains into a conventional-car domeliner instead of Superliner. He said he didn't know which train, tho rumors to date have usually mentioned the SOUTHWEST LIMITED. Judging from his conversation, the main purpose of this would be to put the Superliner cars thus displaced on the Amtrak Auto Train as an experiment. Claytor said he prefers the Superliner lounge to any dome car.....

★ ★ ★

SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA is expected to be the subject of a vote in the California legislature late in the session, close to Sep 15, that will attempt to override the Governor's veto of Caltrans 403(b) funding. Operations will cease Sep 30 if no new arrangements are made. Rail supporters are now telegraming their state senators and assemblymen, urging them to vote for an override. The Nevada press has been publicizing the idea of extending the train to Reno. One supporter of such a plan is Byron Nordberg, former president of Citizens for Rail California. "The SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA is a diamond in the rough," he said. "With a little marketing, it could be a real gold mine for Amtrak." Ridership counts on the train have been climbing to new levels following an advertising campaign funded by contributions to NARP and CRC. Estimated ridership for August if 10,695--the first month of over 10,000 passengers, and 25% above August 1982. Analysis of recent months' ridership shows it attracts 1/3 of all local train riders between Sacramento and L.A. (the COAST STARLIGHT gets the remaining 2/3). Short haul riders between Sacramento and San Jose have increased substantially. Healthy increases are noted in Bay Area-L.A. counts, especially from San Jose.....

★ ★ ★

THE SAN DIEGANS were disrupted the night of Aug 30 by a trestle fire of undetermined origin on the Buena Park trestle over Highway 39. The last two trains of the day from L.A. were blocked, as were the last three from San Diego. Buses were run between Fullerton and L.A. The track was reopened at 5:30am on Aug 31.....

THE CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR is still being delayed sporadically at the Great Salt Lake. With the lake seven feet above its normal height, when winds arise they wash out fill on the SP's causeway. Most recent occurrences were on Sep 1. Amtrak detours over the UP when the lake problems arise.....

MICHIGAN RAIL SUPPORTERS are urging letters to state senators to support five House bills, numbered 4307-4311, which shift train speed limit responsibility from local to state level. Slow speeds in some localities are hurting Amtrak travel times, especially Detroit-Toledo--a 2-hour train trip that takes one hour by car.....

CINCINNATI RAIL SUPPORTERS are being urged to write their city officials to urge redevelopment of Cincinnati Union Terminal in a manner that would accommodate Amtrak. The Terminal needs some redevelopment plan in order to be saved.....

KANSAS CITY STATION owner Kansas City Terminal Railway Co. plans to evict most of the tenants of the station by Oct 31, and the owner will move temporarily to the SP office building. Only Amtrak and two restaurants will remain in the building. But evidently Amtrak must find a new location eventually. The loss of a Federal grant to developers of the station caused renovation plans to fall thru. Renovation costs are also reportedly higher than costs of new construction. However, redevelopers said they had not given up on renovation plans. Owners are cutting off the expensive heating system Oct 31, so Amtrak and the restaurants will have to provide auxiliary heating systems.....

THE SUNSET LIMITED'S operating pattern may be changed. An unconfirmed report says that Amtrak is talking of running the EAGLE as a daily thru train between Chicago and L.A. The CRESCENT would run daily NY-San Antonio.....

THE AMTRAK TURBOLINERS are set for a complete overhaul at Beech Grove shops.....

EXTENDING THE PENNSYLVANIAN from Pittsburgh to Cleveland is being discussed by Amtrak, railroad and state officials.....

NARP'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS will meet in Boston beginning Oct 6.....

THE REAL PEOPLE TV programs on Amtrak will air Sep 14 and 21 on NBC.....

SEABOARD RAILROAD'S PRESIDENT has agreed to let the old L&N station in Mobile be used for the New Orleans-Mobile service. This reduces costs $500,000.....

THE EAGLE'S ON-TIME performance in July was an appaling 7%. Amtrak is trying to improve this by rearranging consists and speeding up boarding and fueling.....

PROPOSED CHARLOTTE-RICHMOND VA branch of the PALMETTO will have a passenger miles per train mile figure of 174, Amtrak projects. The train is to be 403(b).....

DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS: Last issue, p. 4, 13 lines from bottom, "Some 30 riders" should read "Some Thrifty riders". Page 19, 6 lines below the photo, change to "and a rubber (instead of metal) flange".....

News in this issue is updated thru September 1, 1983.

CARS & CONSISTS

*SILVER METEOR, train 88, Jacksonville Aug 19: engines 390, 269; cars 1166, 1454, 2440 "Pacific Beach", 2091 "Loch Lochy", 8507, 25033, 25058, 25047, 25029, 8518, 3118, 25014, 25028, 25055, 25001, 2447 "Sycamore Grove", 1241, 1211. Same, train 87, Aug 22: engines 383, 279; cars 1237, 1629, 2437 "Pacific Ocean", 2088, 8516, 25041, 25039, 25011, 25021, 8500, 3121, 25010, 25003, 25023, 25009, 25099, 2446 "Cypress Grove", 1233.

*SOUTHWEST LIMITED, train 3, Chicago Aug 10: engines 288, 233; cars 1240, 39910, 31023, 39961, 39946, 34031, 33016, 38031, 32063, 32050.

*COLONIAL, train 95, New York Aug 22: engine 901 (AEM); cars 1377, 20139, 21878, 21877, 21096, 20051, 21209, 21149, private car Seaboard "Florida" Pullman-green open-platform business car.

*ANN RUTLEDGE, train 304, Jefferson City MO Aug 2: engine 364; cars 21113, 21229, 20012. Same, train 303: engine 365; cars 21122, 21246, 20033, MoPac 2.

*NJ TRANSIT Monmouth Park Race Track Special, the PONY EXPRESS, New York Penn Station Aug 13 (Saturday only): units 1488, 1489, 1458, 1459, 1311, 1313. (Change at Newark to a diesel train.)

*EMPIRE BUILDER, train 8, Havre MT Jun 29: engines 368, 370; cars 1243, 39929, 34093, 34067, 38036, 33001, 31020, 34083, 32006, 32063, private car "Cynthia" (owned by Hogtrain Inc.), BN "Stampede Pass", BN "Como", dome BN "Glacier View."

STATION CLOSURES

(continued from page 9)

(The station at which I work is not in jeopardy of closing. As far as I know, my station does very well in sales and should be around as long as there is an Amtrak. My interest in this problem stems from a concern with the level of service to Amtrak's passengers, which Amtrak seems to show little concern about. As it is now, so many stations have closed or lost baggage service that we are rapidly losing business and passenger confidence that we can provide even a minimum of decent service.)

(Please note that the period in August tabulated above is generally the slowest period of the summer season. These days do not, of course, take in any holidays, and the listings did not include any group moves, showing just how successful these two stations are.)

RAIL FANTRIPS

Sep 10: Railroad Enthusiasts NY Division annual meeting at Hilton Gateway, Gateway Center, Raymond Blvd, Newark NJ 07102, starting 5pm. Catered dinner. Tour of NJTSouth Amboy yards. $25. RRE c/o WL Smith, Box 1366, Bayonne NJ 07002-6366.

Sep 10-11: Flying Yankee, Boston-Portland-Bangor; 1st psgr train on Maine Central to Bangor since 1960. $189 includes ticket, box lunches, double-occ overnite lodging. Mass. Bay RR Enthusiasts, Box 208, East Walpole MA 02032.

Oct 1: Fall Foliage Special, Utica NY-Cortland NY, 230 miles RT, Susquehanna Alcos and dome cars. John Weber, Utica & Mohawk Valley Chapter NRHS, 7556 Oriskany Road, Rome NY 13440.

Oct 22: Fall Foliage in the Berkshires. NY GCT-White Plains RT via Metro-North Commuter RR and charter motor coach. $34.95 incl buffet dinner. RRE-NY Division c/o WL Smith, PO Box 1366, Bayonne NJ 07002-6366.

Dec 3: Visit to Strassburg Railroad. Leave NY Penn Station 8:40am, back 8:42pm. Includes smorgasbord dinner. Ride steam on the Strassburg. $45. RRE-NY Division c/o WL Smith, PO Box 1366, Bayonne NJ 07022-6366.

Send large SASE when responding to listings. One Rail Fantrips listing is free. Send info to: RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

EXPRESS ADS

AMTRAK - VIA RAIL CANADA - EURAIL PASS - OCEAN LINER CRUISES - RAIL TOURS - RAIL EXCURSIONS - CHARTER RAIL CARS. Arrangements by phone or appointment - use your credit card - Tickets mailed promptly. A fully appointed travel agency with masters of ship and rail travel. GREAT WESTERN TOURS, Sheraton Palace Hotel, Suite 900, 639 Market Street, San Francisco CA 94105. (415) 398-2994.

DINING CAR CHINA, glasses, silver, cloth. Timetables, guides, stationery, rules, metal & Pullman items, annual reports. Many railroads. Long 37¢ stamped envelope brings list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, KS 67213. Will buy items.

GLACIER RAIL HOLIDAY, five summer departure dates, fully escorted all-inclusive tours, using privately owned railroad cars. For additional information, contact Rio Vista Railways, PO Box 19992, Los Angeles, Calif. 90019. (213) 231-8442. Pay by check or credit card. Tickets sent to you by certified mail.

LARGE RAILROAD CHRISTMAS CARDS from as low as $2.41 dozen, delivered. PREDDY'S CARDS, Box 572, Point Roberts WA 98281-0572. Free sample. Canadian $ at par.

GISELLE'S TRAVEL CORP at 1215 4th St. Sacramento CA 95814, Phone: (916) 446-1211 offers rail tickets on AMTRAK - VIA (CANADA) - EURAILPASS along with tours and accommodations in cities to which you are traveling. Let Giselle's help you take your next memorable rail trip.

"ISSUES IN AMERICAN RAIL TRAVEL", RTN's little book on important problems with America's rail passenger revival, is almost ready for publication. Price will be $4.50, which includes relevant tax & postage. Full details will be given later in RTN. Rail Travel News, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads cost just $1.00 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads are only $1.25 per square inch. RTN, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

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Employee Timetables. Public Timetables. Brochures. Guides. Postcards. Tickets. a full line of transportation paper items. New catalogue issued monthly. Send Stamped Self Addressed Envelope for latest list and specials.

199 Wayland St., Hamden, CT 06518

MOVING?

Be sure to send RTN your change of address as early as possible. Don't rely on the Postal Service to forward your mail!

LETTERS

(continued from page 2)

The reservation offices have also used this dodge when conducting internal contests to generate ticket-by-mail revenue. Res clerks are given prizes for being the one on the team with the most ticket-by-mail sales. So when they can sell a ticket over the phone instead of sending the passenger to an Amtrak ticket office, they get the revenue instead of the station where the passenger is to board. Prizes are often days off with pay, so I can understand the res sales office clerks being aggressive. However, this type of sale frequently takes more time to complete due to the address and passenger information needing to be verified. I was told by an Amtrak official on the West Coast that ticket-by-mail sales have a high loss ratio of tickets never being paid for.

Another way that small stations as well as large are losing revenue is if a large group contacts a station about an Amtrak trip they will be turned over to a district sales rep to handle the arrangements. Several times I have seen the sales rep turn around and contact a travel agent who had nothing to do with the group reservation and give the sale to them, shafting the station that originated the contact.

Amtrak could if it wanted turn its own employees in the field into the most valuable sales team ever seen if it would stop telling its ticket clerks that they are expendable. We are generally the first Amtrak employees that the public comes in contact with and sometimes the last if something goes wrong. We know more about train travel than most any travel agent and we want to see Amtrak succeed if given the proper encouragement by management.

Name withheld

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Without refrigerated air in the summer, Houston is an intolerably humid, bug-infested, foul-breathed clime fit only for runaway felons, jungle plants and reptiles."

--Rone Tempest in L.A. Times, Aug 26.

(The recent competition for transit funds between Houston and L.A. seems to have left some bitterness.)

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Ottawa--Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau overhauled his cabinet to try to strengthen his government's sagging popularity... When the last national election was held in February 1980, Mr. Trudeau said he wouldn't lead his party in another election. But since then, he has been less explicit and refused to say when or whether he will resign. The next election must be held before the spring of 1983, but the exact date normally is chosen by the prime minister."

--John Urquhart in Wall Street Journal, Aug 15.

(It is later than you think!)